

Timberline Middle School 500 West Canyon Crest Alpine, Utah 84004

April 11-12, 2007



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Timberline Middle School 500 West Canyon Crest Alpine, Utah 84004

April 11-12, 2007

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 11-12, 2007, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Timberline Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Terry Hill is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Timberline Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Timberline Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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John Spencer	

TIMBERLINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Terry Hill	Principal		
Devon Tufts	Assistant Principal		
Shane Farnsworth	1		
Cheryl Feland			
•	•		
<u>Counseling</u>			
Dianne Brown			
Janette Davenport			
Colleen Roundy			
Support Staff			
<u>Support Sim</u>			
Moana Burgess	Secretary		
Patty Standifird			
Kay Christiansen			
Connie Ormond	Financial Secretary		
Terese Hansen	Registrar		
Janice Hanson	School Nurse		
Glen Vawdrey	Head Custodian		
Doug Vance			
Jason Lewis	Lead Custodian		
Suzanne Palmer			
LuSz Davies	•		
Martha Hadlock			
Jan Larson			
Dianna Barton			
Maela Jacobsen			
Jane Carter			
Emily Johnson	Paraeducator		
Derek Lowry	Paraeducator		
Kerra Mansfield	Paraeducator		
Sally Salmans			
Joyce Anderson			
Linda Allison			
Shanna Christensen	Lunch Staff		
Jackie Cowan	Lunch Staff		

Heather Jones	Lunch Staff
Heather Jones	Lunch Staff
Cindee Pack	Permanent Sub
Ron Taylor	Technical Support
Name	

Faculty

Laurie Anderson Brad Barker Susan Barksdale John Bass Lori Blakesley Nancy Brown Geoff Busby Aimee Chipman Nathan Corry Suzanne Davis Ellen Doane Cheryl Feland Joel Flood Cheryl Fugal Rebecca Gage Nancy Garrison

Jeanine Goold Ashley Gottfredson Jennifer Halverson Pamela Hatch Shauna Horne Phil Hughes Mark Jensen Bryce Jolley Cathy J. Jolley David Kroupa Shannon Lacey Laura Lefler Cami Mappin Josalyn McAllister Mindy McKinnon Dianne Moore

Lea Nelson
Trent Nelson
Ryan Newman
Michelle Oakeson
Lesa Peet
Nicole Robertson
Jacqueline Sarager
Brad Schmidt
Kandis Taylor
Emily Thomas
Maureen Tracy
Heather Whitworth
Michael Wood
Richard Zinman

TIMBERLINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Timberline Middle School community is to foster an environment which encourages and facilitates active inquiry, high individual achievement, and responsible participation in society.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

Curriculum: Teaching involves more than just covering the material in the textbook. It involves committed teaching and high expectations, thereby creating an engaging and successful curriculum.

Culture: As teachers, we will foster creativity and individual strengths in a non-threatening way to a positive learning environment.

Community: We believe a strong and positive parent-student-teacher community relationship through collaboration is key to the educational success of all students.

Attention to Individuals: Students are unique individuals who learn best when both students and teachers recognize their strengths and weaknesses and work together to encourage individual success.

Instruction: We believe teachers should continually monitor their teaching to ensure that every child receives quality instruction. Every student has the right to quality instruction through a variety of strategies.

Assessment: We believe in using a variety of assessments to determine effective instruction, measure student progress and drive curriculum.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Steve Hirase, District Office, Murray School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Dan Barney, South Ogden Junior High, Weber School District

Michael Goodman, Mount Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

Barry Jones, South Ogden Junior High, Weber School District

Barbara Springer, South Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

TIMBERLINE MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Timberline Middle School is located in the northeast section of Alpine School District in the city of Alpine, Utah. The school opened the 2003-04 school year with an initial enrollment of 950 students. The enrollment at Timberline has grown each year, with a current enrollment of 1,109 students.

The ethnic makeup of Timberline Middle School has remained constant during the four years the school has been open with 95.5 percent of the students Caucasian, 1.4 percent Asian, .5 percent Black, 1.5 percent Hispanic, .2 percent Native American, and .9 percent Pacific Islander. The school is in a high socioeconomic area, with only 1.4 percent of the student population receiving free or reduced-price lunch. The school also has an English language learner population of .5 percent, a special education population of 5.2 percent, and a mobility rate of .5 percent

The school has been designed in pods to facilitate teaming within the school. Currently, seventh grade students are teamed in the core areas. Professional learning communities (PLC) have been established within the school, with weekly meetings to further establish and develop common assessments and review of student learning within the content areas.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The students at Timberline Middle School are very focused and engaged in learning and the school environment. They report that the school provides many opportunities for extracurricular activities. Students who attend Timberline Middle School feel they are offered a high-quality education in a safe and nurturing environment where expectations for learning are high.

The faculty is relatively inexperienced, with an average of 8.5 years of teaching experience. The faculty is also committed to its own learning and professional growth, with 39 percent earning advanced degrees and others working toward an advanced degree.

Although the school's analysis of its survey data indicated a high degree of satisfaction in all areas, the weaknesses relative to the survey data included bullying, relating students' individual learning to their lives, and the amount of homework assigned on a daily basis.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The efforts of the school staff and administration regarding the disaggregation and analysis of student learning data are commendable. The Visiting Team felt that the school profile provided a very complete and accurate picture of the school. The Visiting Team has no recommendations for modifications, but encourages the school to continue the collection of longitudinal data related to student learning.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Define the school's learning outcomes (DRSLs) in terms that are observable and measurable.
- Investigate opportunities for collaboration among learning teams and content areas. This would be especially useful for the seventh grade team.
- Provide opportunities for better communication between the school and parents.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?
 - Interviews with staff, students, and parents clearly indicate opportunities for participation in the accreditation process. Out of all the stakeholders, the school faculty clearly had the greatest involvement in the process. The self-study and school profile have been the focus of faculty meetings and professional development days during the past two school years. Parents and students were involved in focus group activities.
- b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?
 - The Visiting Team appreciated the efforts of the school reflected in the thoroughness and accuracy of the school profile. The strength of the document is in the detail of the data provided in the profile. It provides the school with information related to student achievement, including grade point averages, so that they can make an easy determination of which students are learning and, more importantly, which students are not learning. Although the school has low populations of ethnic minority students, low-income students, English language

learners, etc., the data was disaggregated to provide the school with an accurate view of student achievement.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Timberline Middle School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

- 1. Active Inquiry
- 2. High Individual Achievement
- 3. Responsible Participation in Society

The school uses the term "Student Learning Outcome" within the school setting. Wherever they are posted in the school, they are referred to in those terms. However, for the purposes of the school profile and the accreditation process, they are the school's DRSLs. The Visiting Team recommends that the school consider rewording the outcomes to Active Inquirers, High Achievers, and Responsible Citizens.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?
 - With the opening of Timberline Middle School in the fall of 2003, the school administration worked with the school faculty in developing the initial belief statement and mission statement. As the Timberline accreditation team was trained on the accreditation process, other stakeholders were brought into the process. Through the focus group process, parents and students have been involved in the revision of these documents. In addition, the Visiting Team found that the school administration sought input from the school's PTSA and School Community Council. The vision for the school provides a clear and compelling purpose and a good foundation for the school's continued improvement efforts.
- b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?
 - The school's belief statements provide a clear commitment from the staff and administration to support each individual student in the learning process. It also establishes their commitment to support students in areas that will help them be successful outside of the school setting.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

The school's mission and belief statements align well with the DRSLs. The school has done a good job of assessing itself in the department reports and evaluating system-wide effectiveness through the focus group process. The school's action plan provides a good framework for positively affecting student achievement.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The faculty at Timberline is committed to excellence in ensuring their curriculum development is based on the Utah Core Curriculum. The chairperson for this focus group reported meeting for a few hours with his committee—so, while the experience was a very positive one, the time to assess and evaluate curriculum development was limited. The school has only been open for four years, so there have been other concerns to address while shouldering the responsibility of meeting accreditation deadlines. The Timberline staff understands the necessity of taking small steps to engage all faculty members with the accreditation process with regard to aligning the school's curriculum with the State Core. The facilitator reported a willingness to continue the focus group's dialogue among teachers. He reported that the faculty is willing to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and modify it when necessary. Departments already have regularly scheduled meetings where collaboration and sharing of ideas have begun. The staff believes in best teaching practices, and they are anxious to incorporate more collaboration time as a faculty to address the implementation of their Learning Outcomes (DRSLs), then relate those outcomes to their classroom teaching objectives and strategies. Cross-curricular dialogue is in the beginning stages. Most teaming is done in the seventh grade, but there is a strong emphasis on increasing teaming throughout the school. The focus group outlined monitoring student responses to substantiate curriculum objectives, skills, and expectations. The focus group parents did not know that the state mandates standards, nor did they understand professional development for teachers. When the school understands Learning Outcomes (DRSLs) and their importance to the school culture, Timberline is poised to continue developing effective curriculum in each department as well cross-curricular programs.

The Special Education Department has implemented an inclusion program where the special ed. teachers co-teach in regular education classes. The program has been successful and includes peer tutors who are assigned to help special education students with various challenges. The Visiting Team was impressed

with this dedication to following State Core guides and core mandates on modified levels. These teachers have to do their paperwork before and after hours, however, and it is recommended that the teachers be excused from the regular ed. classes on alternating days to decrease their workload.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

As previously mentioned, the school uses the term Learning Outcomes instead of DRSLs. It was evident that the school has a genuine desire to support the modification/development of a curriculum that focus on the school's Learning Outcomes, which can easily become a part of Timberline's school culture. The facilitator was positive that the school and faculty would continue to embrace the outcomes and collaborate to emphasize their importance as a part of Timberline's school culture. The Visiting Team gives high praise to the staff's commitment to revisit their outcomes, state them so that the school understands and embraces them, and move toward substantiating the process in a positive and continuing collaboration.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

It was evident that members of the professional staff individually—and, in some cases, collaboratively—design and demonstrate a variety of effective instructional strategies within the context of their classroom instruction. The Visiting Team observed teachers using a direct instruction/lecture format, independent exploration of topics, collaborative exploration of topics, classroom discussion, lab activities, peer tutoring, and the use of a variety of different technologies to enhance students' learning experiences. Although many teachers are effective with many of these methods, the Visiting Team recommends that all teachers, within their professional learning communities, explore best practices that will actively engage students in learning.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

In the majority of classes observed, teachers employed a variety of instructional strategies with the block of instructional time. The instructional activities were generally directed by the classroom teacher and typically did not allow for differentiation for students with different learning styles. Although the school has small populations of English language learners and special education students, the staff makes accommodations to meet the needs of these individual students.

With respect to data-driven instructional strategies, the Visiting Team notes a lack of classroom-level data to assist the teachers in making decisions related to curriculum and instructional strategies. The departments are working in professional learning communities on the development of common classroom assessments within their respective content areas that would provide data to make these decisions.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The school provides students with a wide variety of opportunities that support student learning and are aligned with the school's learning outcomes. Students report that teachers are readily accessible before school, after school, and during lunch if students require additional academic support. An after-school math tutoring program is provided for all students who are struggling with the acquisition of math concepts. Peer tutoring is provided by regular education students to assist in academic, social, daily living, vocational, and community skills for students with disabilities. The school has established an Esteem Team that is responsible for birthday recognitions, organizing a donut social for new students, providing assistance to new students who enroll during the school year, planning and conducting school service projects, etc. These are just a few examples of the additional opportunities that are provided to students. The Visiting Team commends the staff for offering students additional opportunities that enhance student learning.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The Visiting Team has clearly seen the evidence of school-wide assessment being developed where expectations are clearly defined for staff and students and results are apparent. A shared vision of successful student learning is developed by providing models and exemplars so that teachers, students, and parents know what good performance looks like. End-of-level test scores are evaluated and the results are used to help teachers see areas of strength and areas of content weakness, so those weaker areas can be address where needed.

The Visiting Team also notes that there are some departments that need to analyze and improve their expectations for student achievement.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The staff is striving for more opportunities to collect data from assessments beyond standardized test scores. The push for common assessments in many of the departments is being encouraged, and the results will provide important additional data. It was observed that many departments have clearly defined performance standards and have attempted to align appropriate assessment instruments to those performance standards. The staff is encouraged to share among themselves and to continue their efforts to develop a procedure to concisely identify performance standards and tie appropriate assessment instruments to those standards.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

The administration is very supportive of access to and the use of data. There seems to be strong communication among the administration, teachers, parents, and students with the regard to assessment strategies. Students know, in advance, the concepts they will be held accountable for at the end of the term. Students are given disclosures explaining grading practices, and they also receive assistance such as after-school help, computer programs, study guides, and many other means to help them become successful. Teachers use grading rubrics to ensure unbiased grading.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The school leadership promotes quality instruction by promoting an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning. The leadership and teachers base decisions on impact of student learning. Instructional time is protected, with interruptions and entertainment activities kept to a minimum. Each lesson in each class, each day, is centered on a learning objective explicitly stated to the students and related to the learning objectives. Students and staff members feel valued and important. Efforts are made by the school to honor the work of the students and staff. The school is encouraged to continue to explore current, research-based best practices that provide academic rigor and real-world relevance.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

The decision-making process at Timberline Middle School is collaborative and provides opportunities for the meaningful involvement of the school stakeholders. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students participated in the focus groups. The input of each group was important in giving an accurate description of the

school and making plans for future improvement. The administration is cognizant of the need to remain focused on continual improvement so that the school does not get into a comfort zone of "very good" being good enough.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

The Visiting Team commends the school leadership for its initial efforts to monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness. The overall self-study has been shown to be reflective of the work of the school on behalf of students.

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

The administrators are very visible as instructional leaders in the school. The Visiting Team is aware of an ongoing effort by this administration to continually improve the learning environment at Timberline Middle School. It is evident that the teachers are receptive to the leadership style of the administration and aware of the role that this administration plays on a daily basis to assist teachers, parents, and students in the learning process.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The Visiting Team found evidence that the school administration has made the effort to align school resources (e.g., trust lands funding) with the school improvement plan. The school improvement plan is aligned with the school's DRSLs and action plan.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The school leadership is very involved in empowering the school community in a collaborative effort regarding the sharing of responsibility of student learning. The Community Council is involved in determining the use of trust lands funding. The stakeholders all feel a sense of inclusion in the educational process.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

It is clearly evident that this school has fostered and continues to foster working, community-building relationships within the school. "Productive" and "positive" may be understatements of the level of success with which Timberline Middle School has developed and continues to develop its nurturing environment within the school. The level of positive community involvement and participation inside the school is enormous. It is evident that the school has a positive rapport with the community and continually works, collectively, to achieve all of the goals of the school.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

The school engages parents and families to help build the learning process. There is evidence of productive links between the school and the community that enhance opportunities for student support and achievement. The Visiting Team has no doubt that school community involvement will continue to exist and be strengthened as the school community demonstrates continued needs and success.

<u>Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:</u>

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

The Visiting Team found that Timberline Middle School is highly involved in and committed to professional development programs to help teachers improve their teaching skills and affect student learning. Although the faculty is relatively young, averaging 8.5 years of experience with the median at six years, 39 percent of the faculty members and administrators at Timberline have advanced degrees. There are five professional development days during the year for principal-directed in-service to meet school-wide and departmental goals. The school has an early out day for students each Monday, which provides an hour of departmental collaboration and planning. All faculty members participate in district-sponsored collaboration time on the third Monday of each month to meet with colleagues in other schools and share teaching strategies and assessment tools. The administration actively seeks out in-service, workshop, and professional conference opportunities, and encourages the staff to participate by providing funds to pay for registration. Faculty members participate in state and national professional organizations and subscribe to professional journals.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The Visiting Team found that the administration has worked closely and openly with the staff and the Community Council to foster a culture of collaboration and continuous school improvement and is receptive to new ideas. The faculty is committed to building a community of learners and implementing middle level philosophy and best practices throughout the school. The seventh grade has been organized into teams, and the teachers meet on their own time to discuss individual student needs and assessments. The weekly collaboration time is allocated to departments only. The Visiting Team recommends that more flexibility be allowed in the use of this planning time for seventh grade team members. The Visiting Team recommends that Timberline Middle School explore various forms of teaming and cross-curricular lessons in the other grades as the school continues to explore and implement middle level philosophy and best practices.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE – it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The school-wide action plan provides a framework for the school in addressing student learning. The action plan is aligned with the school's mission, belief statements, and student learning outcomes. Although there is alignment among these components of the self-study, the Visiting Team recommends that much more detail be provided in the action plan.

b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The school had done an adequate job of creating commitment to the action plan. The Visiting Team is confident that the administration will continue to follow through with the revision and implementation of the plan.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

The school administration has shown great ability in implementing school-wide initiatives in the past. The adoption and implementation of a new tardy policy is a prime example of the administrators' skills. The Visiting Team has confidence in the school's follow-up process for implementing and monitoring progress on the action plan.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the staff and administration of Timberline Middle School. The staff is committed to the students and to their individual learning. They set high expectations for students and are committed to academic excellence. The staff members are also very committed to the success of their colleagues. Many of the new staff members commented on the support they have received from the veteran teachers.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on addressing the needs of struggling students. The school has put in place many opportunities for students who are struggling academically. Teachers are available before school, after school, and during lunch periods to assist students who need additional support. An after-school mathematics tutoring program provides additional support. The Special Education Department deserves additional recognition for the many additional hours its members work to provide students with an opportunity to have their program delivered in an inclusive classroom setting.
- The Visiting Team commends the school on establishing and maintaining a positive learning environment within the school. The school goes to great lengths to address the needs of struggling learners while balancing the needs of the other students. It should be noted that Timberline Middle School has the highest CRT scores in the state. The school has not rested on its laurels, but has put programs in place to increase student achievement.

Recommendations:

• The Visiting Team recommends that the school develop indicators for its Learning Outcomes (DRSLs) that are observable and measurable. It is also

recommended that the school consider wording the learning outcomes in terms of the students as the learners (i.e., Active Inquirers, High Achievers, and Responsible Citizens).

• The Visiting Team recommends that the school revise its action plan to be more specific. The goals are aligned with the school's mission, beliefs, and learning outcomes; however, the action steps, timeline, responsibilities, and assessment lack detail.